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PRESS RELEASE

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Community Forum Will Highlight Challenges Facing Women Returning Home From Jail or Prison - Saturday's Event Encourages Public to "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" -

WASHINGTON - The public is invited to a symposium on Saturday, April 9, 2011 that will focus on the challenges facing women who are trying to rebuild their lives after returning home to the District of Columbia from prisons or jails.

The program, called "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes," is from 9 a.m. to noon at Matthews Memorial Baptist Church, 2616 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. SE. The public will hear directly from people who counsel, supervise and work with female ex-offenders, as well as from women who are successfully making the transition from incarceration to the community.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia is presenting the program, along with the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency (CSOSA), the U.S. Parole Commission, Our Place D.C., and Serenity Inc. The forum is part of a broader, community-wide effort to address the needs of ex-offenders and raise public awareness of the issue.

Hundreds of women have returned to the community in recent years after serving prison time for felony violations of District of Columbia laws. In 2009, for example, more than 200 women returned home from prison under CSOSA's supervision.

"Successful re-entry of former offenders returning to our community is critical to reducing recidivism, saving taxpayer dollars, and building safer, healthier neighborhoods," said U.S. Attorney Ronald C. Machen Jr. "This forum allows us to confront the special challenges facing women who return to the community and to build the support systems necessary to get them back on the right track."

"One in ten of the citizens returning home from prison is a woman," said Adrienne R. Poteat, Deputy Director of the Court Services and Offender Supervision Agency. "Their challenges are unique and their success depends upon the active support of the entire community."

“It is a tough journey from incarceration to a happy and successful community life, said Isaac Fulwood, Jr., Chairman of the U.S. Parole Commission. “Walk a mile in her shoes and we would learn the unique challenges a woman faces. We need equality of services for women re-entrants who need good jobs, child care, affordable housing and family counseling.”

The symposium will feature three panel discussions. One will deal in general with the issue of re-entry, another will focus on the special challenges facing women, and the third will showcase success stories and first-person accounts from many of the women themselves.

Our Place D.C. and Serenity Inc. offer a variety of services to help formerly and currently incarcerated women. Leaders of both organizations will speak at the event. Health screening and other services also will be available at the forum. Numerous other community service providers will be on hand to provide information about their programs.

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